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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	OIGO-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	DCP-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/001W	

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1190

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO ASEAN COLLECTIVE

CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002142

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2009

TAGS: PREL, MARR, MASS, TH

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY CALL ON NEW THAI DEFENSE
MINISTER CHETTA

REF: A. STATE 65797

B. BANGKOK 716

C. BANGKOK 717

Classified By: Ambassador Darryl Johnson, reason 1.4 (d)

1. (SBU) Summary: During the Ambassador's introductory call on March 26, the new Thai Defense Minister, GEN (ret) Chetta Thanajaro, reiterated Thailand's desire to continue to work with the US as a close ally. Chetta stressed the importance of military education (IMET), mil-mil exercises, and intelligence ties as the foundations of a long-standing, productive partnership. The Ambassador raised the future of the Thai deployment in Iraq and the upcoming force generation conference in Warsaw; emphasized the consultative nature of the Global Force Posture Restructuring process which A/S Kelly had previewed with Thai leaders in late January (refs b,c); and previewed a Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) related proposal which would be discussed in greater detail with the MFA (ref a). On the unsettled security situation in the south, Chetta expressed optimism that the situation would improve now that police, military, and civilian authorities were working better as a team. Chetta favored de-emphasizing the military presence in populated areas as a way of deescalating tensions. End Summary.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, L. HEDGBETH, DAS, A/ISS

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

DECLASSIFY AFTER: 26 MAR 2024

DATE/CASE ID: 13 MAY 2009 200706444

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Education, Exercises, and Intelligence Sharing

2. (SBU) GEN Chetta welcomed the Ambassador by noting that he had asked his staff to arrange his schedule so that he would receive the US Ambassador before any other envoys, emphasizing the importance he placed on the Thai-US bilateral relationship. President Bush's visit to Royal Thai Army (RTA) Headquarters in October 2003, at the time of the APEC Leaders' Meetings, was a high point in the relationship, and truly reflective of the close relationship between the militaries of the two countries. Thai leaders were very appreciative of the close cooperation and good relationship they enjoyed with US counterparts. Chetta himself recalled his trip as RTA Commander to the US with fondness (note: Chetta retired as RTA CINC in 1998. end note).

3. (SBU) Chetta went on to highlight three general issues which he felt formed the foundation of the vibrant mil-mil relationship: education, combined training, and intelligence cooperation. He noted that he had attended Ranger School at Ft. Benning as a Second Lieutenant thanks to IMET. Chetta stressed the vital importance of IMET through the years in cultivating a professional Thai officer corps; indeed, he couldn't think of an RTA CINC who hadn't been IMET trained. He expressed hope that IMET would continue to play this key role in the future as well.

4. (U) Moving to the robust US-Thai exercise calendar, Chetta said that he considered Cobra Gold to be the most impressive and important exercise in the region annually. He agreed with the Ambassador that the roughly 40 annual exercises created a deep and productive exercise relationship; there was much more than just Cobra Gold. Taken together, the exercises offered both sides not just valuable training but a chance for the two militaries to get to know each other in the field; he hoped that such collaboration would continue in the future.

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Coalition Deployments and CT successes

6. (SBU) The Ambassador replied that the two countries

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continued to build on the foundations Chetta described to meet emerging mutual challenges. Exercises did more than just allow our troops to get to know each other; they prepared our militaries for real life deployments, as the Thai deployments to Afghanistan as part of OEF and Iraq as part of OIF in the past year showed. The US was very pleased that Thailand had joined with the US in coalition efforts to bring peace and stability to both countries. Noting that the second six-month Thai rotation to Iraq was currently in the process of deploying to Karbala, Iraq, the Ambassador asked Chetta to seriously consider what might be possible subsequently. A force generation planning conference would be held in Warsaw in early April; we understood that the Thai would be sending a military planner to the Conference.

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Global Force Posture Review

8. (SBU) Referencing conversations Assistant Secretary James Kelly held with Thai officials in late January regarding the ongoing US Global Force Posture Review (refs b, c), the Ambassador emphasized that the US would continue to consult with its allies before settling on any plans which would affect them. Chetta mentioned that he had heard stories about these plans on Thai radio in the morning (note: reflecting coverage of the 3/25 Washington Post article. end note). The Ambassador emphasized that it was still not clear if or how the proposals might affect the US-Thai mil-mil relationship, but we certainly would look for continued access to facilities for exercises and to support deployments. Security challenges in today's world required greater mobility and flexibility than in the past, and US force posture was likely to change in Europe and parts of Asia. We already enjoyed unlimited access to places like Utapao on a case-by-case basis, for which we were very appreciative. We were working with the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) to build a new structure on the SEAL island off of Sattahip

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for additional exercise use. Initiatives like this reinforced our ability to work together to meet mutual needs. Chetta thanked the Ambassador for sharing US perspectives on this issue.

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12. (SBU) Bio note: Chetta was clearly proud of his long-standing US ties. He spoke with affection about his "Benning Buddy" from Ranger training who had visited him several times in Thailand over the decades and had recently retired. He said that his one regret from his travel to the US as RTA CINC was that he did not have an opportunity to return to Ft. Benning. One of Chetta's daughters is currently enrolled in a PhD program at George Washington

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University, and another child already has a PhD from George Washington.

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